

Department of State  
Washington, DC

October 2003

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The content of the proposed regulations at The Hague governing international adoptions is quite unacceptable. American adoption agencies, both large and small, already have adequate and proper State regulation to ensure the welfare of children.

It has been shown in monitoring the countries which have already implemented the Hague Convention, that these regulations only delay or prevent a helpless infant or child from being placed quickly with a pre-screened family. To my knowledge, foreign governments are willing to let their orphans be adopted because they themselves lack the resources to care adequately for these children as they would wish. Letting their orphans go to a waiting family in another country guarantees that the child will have a better future.

We have fostered 3 American-born children, trying to provide them with a family for as long as we had them. When it came time for us to adopt "forever children", we turned to Thursday's Child in Bloomfield, CT, near where we lived at the time. They are a small agency dedicated to building families. During our home studies and post-placement times, Thursday's Child was honest and above-board with us, telling us frankly what our status was at all times. It was refreshing to deal with an agency whose staff was so accessible to us and were the experts who guided us through the intricacies of foreign adoption. Without them, we would not have two beautiful and healthy children from India.

In our experience, small adoption agencies are doing a fine job of screening couples and finding adoptable children who need parents. Another layer of bureaucracy is not needed. The additional financial burden on parents and agencies will mean that fewer children find families. A waiting child is not the same as a box on a shelf. Children need proper care, food, and, above all, LOVE; and they need it right now. Any child development educator can assure you that a baby must be placed with a family as fast as possible. Older children and siblings groups must have a permanent family just as quickly before the irreparable emotional damage of being without a family is done.

The children cannot wait: they are live, growing beings to whom a day without parents truly is a day without sunshine.

Please consider the children and their fate before the U.S. Government ties us WITHOUT OUR CONSENT to this poorly written and poorly conceived "treaty". A treaty should make things better. It should not condemn orphaned children to starvation and rapid early deaths because of some selfish pencil-pushers somewhere who don't know anything about the realities of adopting internationally, but whose "actions" will raise adoption costs and thereby prevent the hopes and dreams of decent people everywhere who only want to become a real family.

I find that people who have produced biological children have extreme difficulty in grasping the simple idea that childless couples want children. That is their loss. Our adopted children really ARE our children, unequivocally. I strongly recommend that you stand in an airport near the families who are waiting for their babies to arrive. When each of our babies arrived, all we could see was our baby. Later on, photographs revealed that most of the passengers had waited to see us hold our baby for the first time. I think that says a lot about the character of Americans. We want our children and want the process to occur with legal and moral safeguards, but not those that will deter adoptions, cause costs to rise and eliminate the wonderful smaller agencies of our nation who provide excellent services to both families and children.

Sincerely,  
Linda & Charles Ravenell  
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P.S.: Charles and I both are disabled Vietnam Veterans unable to produce biological children because of medical conditions caused by our service in the U.S. Army, 1966-1969. Perhaps someone should ask other veterans about their feelings on adoption after honorable service to the USA and raising children on veterans' disability benefits.

Linda Ravenell